



## AHLAW

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**AHLAW** (Ahlav; written *ʾhlwb*), a middle Persian term which plays a fundamental role in Mazdean soteriology and which is usually translated as “just.” It is not exclusively Zoroastrian, since it is found both in Avestan (*ašāvan-*) and in Old Persian (*artāvan-*). The former term is derived from Avestan *aša-* (OIr. *\*rta-*), whose significance is complex, but which specifically denotes the cosmic order, both social and moral. The *ašāvan* respects this order or works to maintain it, while the *drəgvant-* is adept at lying, i.e., devoted to disorder. The renderings “falsehood” and “truth” have a connotation that is too exclusively moral; according to G. Dumézil, it is rather a question of an order comprising three functions defined in keeping with the Indo-European ideology. Although *ahlav* should retain the primordial etymological sense of *ašāvan*, which it translates in the Pahlavi texts, it does not fully express the term’s complex nuances.

The clearly eschatological sense of the term appears at the end of Xerxes’ inscription against the *daivas*: “He who has had respect for the law that Ahura Mazdā established . . . will be happy as long as he lives and *artāvā* when he dies.” The descendant of this word (Mid. Pers. *ardāy*/Parth. *ardāv*, written *ʾltʾdy*, *ʾltʾy*) appears in the 3rd century inscriptions of the mage Kirdēr relating his trip to the other world and summarizing his eschatological concepts (at Naqš-e Rājab). Even if *ardāyih* does not directly connote an eschatological condition, as J. de Menasce held (“Vieux-perse “artavan”,” p. 58), the reference to the other world is nevertheless indisputably present. Menasce showed that, in Pahlavi texts, *ahlav* often has a post mortem reference; thus in the *Mēnōg ī*



*xrad*, it is said of the inhabitants of *Ērān-vēž* that “when they die, they are *ahlav*.” The identity of the optatives *anōšag bāš* and *ahlav bāš* is another striking proof. However to become *ahlav* is also to acquire the status of being just in this world and is a precondition for attaining paradise; this is often emphasized in other texts.

In Manichean Middle Persian, *’rd’w* designates one of the elect individuals of the community. But the eschatological significance is probably not completely absent, as a passage recently reconstructed by W. Sundermann shows: Mānī meets a celestial person, an *ardāv*, who shows him what is greatest and most luminous in the world. The *ardāv* is neither one of the just nor a member of the elect, but an inhabitant of the other world, a point indicated by another fragment, in which the word appears in connection with the gods: “Among the benevolent gods and *ardāvān*, may you be immortal forever!” (M8286).

The epithet *ardā* given to the famous Virāz does not simply illustrate his status as a just man and an adept of the “good religion;” it is appropriate to him as a person whose role is completely tied to the other world—hence his extraterrestrial voyage which revealed paradise and hell to him. It is equally significant that in the book of *Ardā Virāz*, Srōš, the divinity that plays an important role at the moment of death, is constantly qualified by the adjective *ahlav*. Thus, to be *ahlav* is to merit the salvation conferred on those who follow the way of Aša and at the same time to retain the status of the just after death.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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